

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: GY, CARICOM
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM ENDORSES CARICOM SUMMIT

REF: GEORGETOWN 29

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN A STATEMENT PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS JANUARY 1 AND SUBSEQUENTLY BROADCAST NATIONWIDE, PRIME MINISTER FORBES BURNHAM MADE A HIGHLY POSITIVE POLICY STATEMENT CONCERNING CARICOM. HE SAID THAT THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY IS SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO ALLOW EACH TERRITORY TO PURSUE ITS BASIC OBJECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT WHILE EXPANDING AREAS FOR COOPERATION AND STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL INSTITUTION. ALTHOUGH ENDORSING THE IDEA OF A CARICOM HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING, HE PROPOSED THAT SUCH A SUMMIT BE PRECEDED IN JANUARY BY SEPARATE MEETINGS OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRADE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE AND NATURAL RESOURCES. BURNHAM ACCEPTED SOME BLAME FOR STRAINS ON CARICOM DURING 1977. HE APPEARS TO BE READY TO MAKE A SINCERE EFFORT TO PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION AND MAKE PEACE WITH PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS. END SUMMARY.

1. BURNHAM ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IN 1977 CARICOM HAD UNDER-
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GONE SEVERE STRAIN, GIVING RISE TO DIRE PREDICTIONS OF ITS IMMINENT BREAKUP. HE SAID THAT THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH HAVE BESET MOST OF THE COUNTRIES OF CARICOM HAD CAUSED CERTAIN COUNTRIES--GUYANA AND JAMAICA, IN PARTICULAR--TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH HAD AN ADVERSE EFFECT UPON OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THESE MEASURES HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT OF

NECESSITY AND NOT WITH THE INTENT TO INJURE OR DAMAGE THE INTERESTS OF GUYANA'S CARICOM PARTNERS. RESTRICTIONS ON PURCHASE OF GOODS FROM OTHER CARICOM COUNTRIES HAD BEEN CAUSED BY A SHORTAGE OF FUNDS.

2. THE SOLUTION, HE SAID, TO THE PRESENT PROBLEMS OF CARICOM DID NOT REST IN ONE COUNTRY GIVING AID TO ANOTHER BUT IN DEVELOPING INTER-TERRITORIAL RELATIONS TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL AND WHICH WOULD STIMULATE INDUSTRIES IN EACH COUNTRY. HE CALLED FOR THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF DIALOGUE RATHER THAN COMPLAINT AND CRITICISM. A SOBER EXAMINATION AND ANALYSIS OF WHAT AILED CARICOM WAS NECESSARY. THE SQUABBLES AND BICKERINGS OF THE PAST SHOULD BE DROPPED. THE NATIONS OF THE AREA WERE BOUND TOGETHER BY HISTORY AND A COMMON CONDITION. WITH DETERMINATION, HE SAID, THE LEADERS OF THE AREA COULD PUT A HALT TO THE DRIFT TOWARD DISSOLUTION OF CARICOM.

3. BURNHAM ENDORSED THE IDEA OF A MEETING OF HEADS OF CARICOM STATES MADE BY PRIME MINISTER MANLEY OF JAMAICA AND SAID THAT SUCH A MEETING SHOULD BE HELD EARLY IN 1978. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE CONFUSION WHICH CURRENTLY EXISTS WITHIN THE REGION ABOUT THE MOTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF SOME OF ITS MEMBER STATES, BURNHAM SAID THAT SUCH A SUMMIT MEETING SHOULD BE PRECEDED BY PREPARATORY MEETINGS OF MINISTERS CONCERNED WITH THE ECONOMIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE MEMBER STATES.

4. SPECIFICALLY HE SUGGESTED THAT DURING JANUARY 1978 THERE BE THE FOLLOWING FOUR MEETINGS:
--A MEETING OF MINISTERS OF TRADE,
--A MEETING OF MINISTERS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
--A MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FINANCE, AND
--A MEETING OF MINISTERS OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

5. BURNHAM SUGGESTED THAT GUYANA HOST ONE MEETING, THAT OF THE MINISTERS OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND OTHER MEMBER COUNTRIES HOST THE OTHER THREE MEETINGS.

6. THE MINISTERS OF TRADE WOULD DISCUSS THE DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE ARISEN IN TRADE MATTERS AND PERHAPS SUGGEST ADJUSTMENTS TO MEET THE LEGITIMATE CONCERNS OF MEMBER NATIONS. THE MINISTERS OF FINANCE WOULD DISCUSS THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION AS TO THE SOLUTIONS BEING SOUGHT. THEY COULD SEEK AREAS OF COORDINATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CARICOM FOR OVERCOMING THE DIFFICULTIES. THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FINANCE WOULD NOT BE AN OCCASION

FOR SEEKING AID. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS WOULD DISCUSS PLANS FOR SOLVING THEIR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WITHIN THE SHORT TERM IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH MAINTAINING CARICOM. THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR NATURAL RESOURCES--WHO HAD NEVER MET SINCE THE INCEPTION OF CARICOM--WOULD REVIEW THE NATURAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE WITHIN THE REGION AND COULD MAKE SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING INTEGRATED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

7. BURNHAM URGED THAT THE MINISTERS' MEETINGS BE ACCOMPLISHED IN JANUARY. HE HOPED THEY WOULD CREATE A CLIMATE IN WHICH ONE COULD LOOK FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM TO THE OUTCOME OF A CARICOM SUMMIT MEETING. IN CONCLUDING, HE REITERATED THAT WITH COLLABORATION BY GOVERNMENTS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TREND TOWARD THE FRAGMENTATION OF CARICOM COULD BE ENDED AND THE INSTITUTION EVENTUALLY STRENGTHENED TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL PEOPLE OF THE REGION.

8. COMMENT: AS IN HIS NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE TO THE GUYANESE PEOPLE, BURNHAM'S STATEMENT ON CARICOM AVOIDED ANY HINT OF AGGRESSIVENESS OR SARCASM. HIS EXPLICIT ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLACING SOME OF THE STRAINS ON CARICOM DURING 1977 APPEARS TO BE AN OLIVE BRANCH POINTED TOWARD TRINIDAD'S ERIC WILLIAMS. HIS PROPOSAL THAT SEVERAL MINISTERS CONFERENCES TAKE PLACE IN JANUARY TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT MEETING SEEMS LOGICAL, GIVEN THE CONFUSION AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS WHICH HAVE EXISTED RECENTLY BETWEEN THE MAJOR CARICOM STATES. FOREIGN MINISTER WILLS TOLD CHARGE JAN 5 THAT GOG HAS NOT YET RECEIVED REACTIONS OF OTHER CARICOM GOVERNMENTS.
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